



FREEDOM WATCH



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News briefs

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Pentagon refutes wedding bomb report

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has denied a U.S. plane that bombed an Afghan wedding party had instigated the attack based on information supplied by a rival faction of the bombing victims. The Pentagon also said a four-hour video tape recorded by the crew of an AC-130 gunship showed the U.S. plane was taking fire from the ground when it launched the attack.

"I have every reason to believe it had not happened, and that was in the most recent incident where we had people on the ground for a prolonged period that were there with eyes on targets and saw an anti-aircraft and targeted those. And it was not some rival warlord turning U.S. forces against one of their rival warlord enemies," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said.

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Rumsfeld: much remains to be done

By Linda D. Kozaryn
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON—Nine months into the global war on terror, the nation remains closer to the beginning than to the end, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said today at the Pentagon.

"Our goal is that Afghanistan not become a base for global terrorist networks again," Rumsfeld said. "That work is, of course, by no means complete. Taliban and al Qaeda fugitives are still at large, some in Afghanistan; others fled across the borders waiting for the opportunity to return."

Danger remains as evidenced by

the recent attacks on U.S. forces in Kandahar and in Oruzgan Province, he said.

In recent weeks, he noted, local Afghans have told U.S. and coalition forces where to find weapons caches, which are then either destroyed or turned over to the Afghan National Army.

To date, Rumsfeld noted, the campaign has caused fewer tragic losses of civilian life than any war in modern history. He said U.S. and Coalition forces have gone to "extraordinary lengths not only to avoid civilian deaths but to save civilian lives."

"It's an unfortunate fact of war that

inevitably innocent civilians are killed," he said. "This has been true throughout the history of warfare and it remains true even in this age of advanced technology and precision-guided munitions."

While much work remains to be done in Afghanistan, Rumsfeld said, the U.S.-led effort has accomplished much in reversing the tide of terrorism and restoring freedom to the Afghan people. Rumsfeld highlighted the transformation that's taken place in Afghanistan.

Nine months ago, he said, "it was

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Newly formed mortar men add punch to TF Panther

Story & photo by Spc.

Jason B. Baker

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KHANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan—A victorious cheer goes up as a plume of black smoke consumes an old Soviet tank on a former terrorist training camp named Tamack Farms, now being used by coalition forces at Khandahar Airfield for live fire training.

Staff Sgt. Martin Leyva, section chief, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, confidently announces, "It's a direct hit!"

This time the round did not come from the howitzer, Leyva's usual weapon. Leyva is one of the members

of the 319th AFAR, who was cross-trained on the 120mm mortars to augment Task Force Panther in Afghanistan.

The artillerymen began training on the mortar system six weeks prior to deployment, said Staff Sgt. Tim Otteson, Co. C, 3rd Bn., 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, who trains the artillerymen on the mortars.

"We started off with the same training an 11C (mortar man) receives in advanced individual training," Otteson said. "We used the 11C training manuals and came up with the tasks and trained them (artillerymen) in two weeks."

During the first week

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A 120mm mortar leaves the tube during a live fire training exercise at Tarnack Farms.

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a pariah state, a training ground for thousands of terrorists.” Al Qaeda had free reign to plan and organize attacks and Taliban brutally repressed the Afghan people. Today, Rumsfeld said, the Taliban are no longer in power and al Qaeda are on the run.

“Together with coalition partners, we’ve rounded up some 600 terrorists in Afghanistan and many hundreds more worldwide,” he said.

The humanitarian crisis has been averted and the Afghan people have been liberated. The U.S. and Coalition partners have delivered about 500,000 metric tons of food since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, enough to feed 7 million Afghans, and Afghanistan is once again a free nation.

“A new president has been chosen, a new cabinet has been sworn, a transitional government representative of the Afghan people has been established to lead the nation for the next two years,” he said.

U.S. officials are working with the new government to lay the foundation for long-term stability and to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a terrorist haven. The United States and 28 countries are supporting the creation of the Afghan National Army. Demining teams from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, Poland and Jordan are helping to clear land mines, although an enormous number remain.

U.S. military engineers and civil affairs teams have dug wells, built hospitals, repaired roads and rebuilt schools. Russia cleared out and rebuilt a tunnel on the main artery linking Kabul with the north, allowing transportation of food, medicine and supplies. Jordan built a hospital in Mazar-e Sharif that has treated 86,000 people, including 18,000 children.

Rumsfeld said 70 nations are supporting the war on terrorism, and 35 have posted representatives at U.S. Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Fla.

Some British and Canadian forces are rotating out of Afghanistan, Rumsfeld said, while Turkey has increased its presence by sending about 1,400 troops to Kabul to lead the International Security Assistance Force. Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands will soon deploy F-16 fighters to Kyrgyzstan for air operations over Afghanistan.

Romania is deploying an infantry battalion and has offered a mountain infantry company, a nuclear, biological and chemical response company and four MiG-21 fighters. Slovakia will soon deploy an engineering unit.

“A lot of work remains to be done,” Rumsfeld said, “but even at this early stage in the war, the coalition can take a good deal of pride in the successes that they’ve achieved thus far as we renew our resolve to meet the challenges we face ahead.”



Photo by Spc. Jason B. Baker, 49th PAD (Abn.)

A Soviet tank sitting on Tarnack Farms, a former al Qaeda training camp, is targeted through the sight of a 120mm mortar.

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the paratroopers learned how to assemble the mortars, ran crew drills and dry fires, said Sgt. Emilian Wojcik, gunner, Battery A, 1st Bn., 319th AFAR. By the second week the artillerymen were ready for live-fire training.

The experience with artillery made crossing over to mortars much easier, said Wojcik. Many of the principles are the same; both are indirect fire systems and the smaller size made the mortar easier to move and setup.

By the second week, the artillerymen were taking out their new weapon, the 120mm mortar, and using live rounds during a gunner’s test. The majority of the battery qualified as experts.

The success of the artillerymen could also be attributed to an eagerness

to learn a new weapons system, said Sgt. Luis Allende, gunner, Battery A, 1st Bn., 319th AFAR.

“It makes me feel good to know I’m one of the few artillerymen that has also learned an infantry skill,” Allende said. “I feel I’m part infantry and artillery now.”

A healthy bit of competition helped motivate the artillerymen during training, said Pfc. Adam Deshong, fire direction center, Batt. A, 1st Bn., 319th AFAR.

“The competition between the artillery and infantry is good,” Deshong commented. “It makes us try a little harder. If the competition wasn’t there we might not do as well.”

Because the competition was never serious, Wojcik said the two units have come together as a team quite well.

“Being paratroopers, I don’t think the rivalry is as

serious as other places,” Wojcik added. “We have that common bond. They’re our brothers and we have respect for one another’s jobs.”

The addition of the artillerymen as a 120mm mortar platoon has increased the firepower of the task force, said Wojcik. The added skill has also made the 319th AFAR more of an asset to the 82nd Airborne Division.

“I think this is the best thing to happen to division artillery in a long time,” Wojcik said. “This has increased our capabilities because we can be used as either artillerymen or mortar men now.”

The paratroopers of Task Force Panther can work confidently knowing the artillerymen turned mortar men of the 319th AFAR will deliver a 120mm “direct hit” whenever it is requested.

Vehicle purchases can be made from overseas

Army and Air Force Exchange Service

DALLAS — The Army and Air Force Exchange Service is now authorized to sell motor vehicles to authorized patrons serving outside the continental United States for at least 30 consecutive days. The new vehicles can be purchased for in-country or stateside delivery.

“This is a nice change that benefits service-members who will be deployed overseas 30 days or longer,” said AAFES Commander Maj. Gen. C.J. Wax. “Customers have shown a lot of interest in this issue and we’re delighted that we can now accommodate troops assigned temporarily overseas who are in the market for a new vehicle.”

Previously, only those patrons assigned outside the continental United States who were on permanent change of station orders could purchase a new vehicle from Overseas Military Sales Corporation for in-country or stateside delivery. The new policy is effective immediately.

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WorldCom: We’ll be back

NEW YORK — WorldCom hopes to emerge from Chapter 11 by next summer, CEO John Sidgmore said Monday, a day after one of the shining lights of the 1990s telecommunications and Internet boom filed the biggest bankruptcy in U.S. history.

“My hope is we can go through Chapter 11 as quickly as possible,” Sidgmore told reporters at a morning news conference in midtown Manhattan, adding he hoped the company could reorganize and emerge from bankruptcy in nine to 12 months.

U.S. ‘fabricating’ China threat

WASHINGTON — Beijing has hit back at the U.S., accusing the Pentagon and a congressional commission of fabricating a ‘China threat’ and warning that one of the biggest risks faced by China was continuing U.S. arm sales to Taiwan. Separately prepared reports by the Pentagon and the U.S.-China Security Review Commission released last week raised alarms about China as a potential military and economic rival.

U.S. called in to help guard Afghan head

KABUL, Afghanistan — Between 40 and 50 U.S. specialists will train a new security force to protect Afghan President Hamid Karzai as concern over his safety mounts, according to an official from this Central Asian nation.

The move came after the Afghan government asked the United States to “help our security people,” Fazel Akbar, a spokesman for Karzai told CNN on Monday.

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER REPORT:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
<u>Bagram:</u>	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 97F L: 59F	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 100F L: 63F
<u>Khandahar:</u>	<i>Dusty</i> H: 99F L: 79F	<i>Dusty</i> H: 100F L: 75F
<u>Kabul:</u>	<i>Haze</i> H: 95F L: 66F	<i>Haze</i> H: 95F L: 68F
<u>Uzbekistan:</u>	<i>Clear</i> H: 98F L: 65F	<i>Clear</i> H: 104F L: 75F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

FREEDOM WATCH

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COALITION SPORTSZONE

The Day in Sports

Harrington signs with Lions

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — Quarterback Joey Harrington made good on his promise, signing with the Detroit Lions in time to take part in training camp Tuesday. Harrington, the No. 3 overall pick in this year's draft, told the team he would not hold out. The former Oregon standout signed in the morning, in time for practice for quarterbacks, rookies and selected veterans. Team president Matt Millen declined to provide contract details, but Harrington said it's for six years. The deal is worth about \$36.5 million, a football source said on the condition of anonymity. Harrington is guaranteed to make \$13.5 million in combined bonuses, another source close to the negotiations said on the condition of anonymity.

Rogers nixes trade to Reds

CINCINNATI — Kenny Rogers decided it was more important to keep his family in Texas than to take a chance at the playoffs. After several days of mulling it over, the left-hander blocked a tentative deal Tuesday that would have sent him to the Cincinnati Reds for three minor leaguers. Rogers invoked a no-trade clause in his contract, deciding to keep his word that he would play out his contract with the last-place Rangers. "It was really a family decision more than a baseball decision," Rogers' agent, Scott Boras, said Tuesday. The Reds lobbied Rogers to approve the deal that was arranged over the weekend. General manager Jim Bowden spoke with the pitcher several times by phone. Instead, Rogers decided it was more important to keep his wife, Rebecca, and two children in Texas for the rest of the season. The 37-year-old Rogers is a free agent after the season.

Armstrong retains yellow jersey

LES DEUX-ALPES, France — Colombian rider Santiago Botero claimed his second stage victory of this Tour de France by winning Tuesday's 15th leg, the longest of the three-week competition. Lance Armstrong finished 6 minutes and 41 seconds off the pace, but his big overall lead was unchanged and he remained on course for a fourth straight Tour title when the race finishes Sunday. The Texan crossed the line just behind his main rival, Spain's Joseba Beloki, who surged ahead in the final few hundred yards. Armstrong was surprised, but caught up quickly and clocked the same time as Beloki. It's expected Armstrong will try extending his 4:21 lead over Beloki in Wednesday's stage from Les Deux-Alpes to La Plagne, which features three exceptionally difficult climbs. Botero timed 5 hours, 55 minutes and 16 seconds in Tuesday's 140.43-mile run from Vaison-la-Romaine in the southern Provence region to this ski station in the Alps. He took the lead some 99 miles before the finish and never dropped back.

Mobster claims players fixed games in late '70s

NEW YORK — A man who said he represents admitted mobster Michael Franzese told ESPN.com Tuesday afternoon that Franzese never identified any team or players in an HBO interview about baseball players fixing games in the 1970s. That contradicts reports from several media outlets, including the New York Post, that said the Yankees were one of the teams Franzese was talking about on HBO's "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel" when he said that baseball players in the 1970s owed money to the Columbo crime family. HBO reported the team in question was the Yankees, and Franzese said the Yankees back then "had some gambling issues." The Yankees went so far as to issue a statement denying the charges. Rob Michaels, who said he represents Franzese, told ESPN.com that Franzese never said the team was the Yankees. Michaels, of Lord and Michaels Entertainment, said that Franzese is a lifelong Yankees fan and that the HBO tape doesn't show Franzese saying anything about the team.

2002 Major League standings

American League East GB

N.Y. Yankees	62-37	.626	-
Boston	58-39	.598	3
Baltimore	47-50	.485	14

American League Central GB

Minnesota	60-41	.594	-
Chicago (AL)	46-55	.455	14
Cleveland	44-55	.444	15

American League West GB

Seattle	60-39	.606	-
Anaheim	58-39	.598	1
Oakland	58-41	.586	2

National League East GB

Atlanta	65-36	.644	-
N.Y. Mets	52-48	.520	12.5
Montreal	49-51	.490	15.5

National League Central GB

St. Louis	54-42	.562	-
Cincinnati	52-48	.520	4
Houston	49-50	.495	6.5

National League West GB

Arizona	58-41	.586	-
San Francisco	56-43	.566	2
Los Angeles	56-44	.560	2.5

Tuesday's results

Boston 22-4 Tampa Bay
Philadelphia 7-4 Chicago Cubs
Cleveland 9-3 N.Y. Yankees
Detroit 10-1 Kansas City
Atlanta 5-3 Florida
Cincinnati 7-2 Pittsburgh
N.Y. Mets 4-3 Montreal
Houston 7-4 Milwaukee
Seattle 4-1 Texas
Toronto at Baltimore — postponed
Chicago Sox 8-7 Minnesota
Los Angeles 8-6 San Diego
Oakland 2-1 Anaheim
Arizona 8-5 Colorado
St. Louis 4-0 San Francisco

Today's schedule

Pittsburgh at Cincinnati
Atlanta at Florida
Minnesota at Chicago Sox
Philadelphia at Chicago Cubs
Toronto at Baltimore
Los Angeles at San Diego
Tampa Bay at Boston
N.Y. Yankees at Cleveland
Kansas City at Detroit
St. Louis at San Francisco
Montreal at N.Y. Mets
Milwaukee at Houston
Oakland at Anaheim
Texas at Seattle
Colorado at Arizona